

## FACTS ABOUT DOWN SYNDROME AND LANGUAGE GUIDELINES



### FACTS ABOUT DOWN SYNDROME

- Down syndrome is a common genetic variation which usually causes delay in physical, intellectual, and language development. It is not related to race, nationality, religion, or socio-economic status.
- There is a wide variation in mental abilities, behavior, and physical development in individuals with Down syndrome. Each individual has his/her own unique personality, capabilities, and talents.
- Individuals with Down syndrome benefit from loving homes, early intervention, special education, appropriate medical care, and positive public attitudes.
- In adulthood, many persons with Down syndrome hold jobs, live independently, and enjoy recreational opportunities in their communities.
- There are approximately a quarter of a million families in the United States affected by Down syndrome. Of all children born in this country annually, approximately 5,000 will have Down syndrome.

### LANGUAGE GUIDELINES

- The correct name of this diagnosis is Down syndrome. There is no apostrophe “s” in Down. The “s” in syndrome is not capitalized (syndrome).
- Encourage people to use people-first language.
- An individual with Down syndrome is an individual first and foremost.
- The emphasis should be on the person, not the disability. A person with Down syndrome has many other qualities and attributes that can be used to describe them.
- “The person with Down syndrome,” not “the Down syndrome person.”
- A person with Down syndrome is not “a Downs person.”
- It is important to use the correct terminology.
- A person “has” Down syndrome, rather than “suffers from,” “is a victim of,” “is diseased with,” or “afflicted by.”
- Each person has his/her own unique strengths, capabilities, and talents.
- Try not to use the clichés that are so common when describing an individual with Down syndrome. To assume all people have the same characteristics or abilities is demeaning. Also, it reinforces the stereotype that “all people with Down syndrome are the same.”